

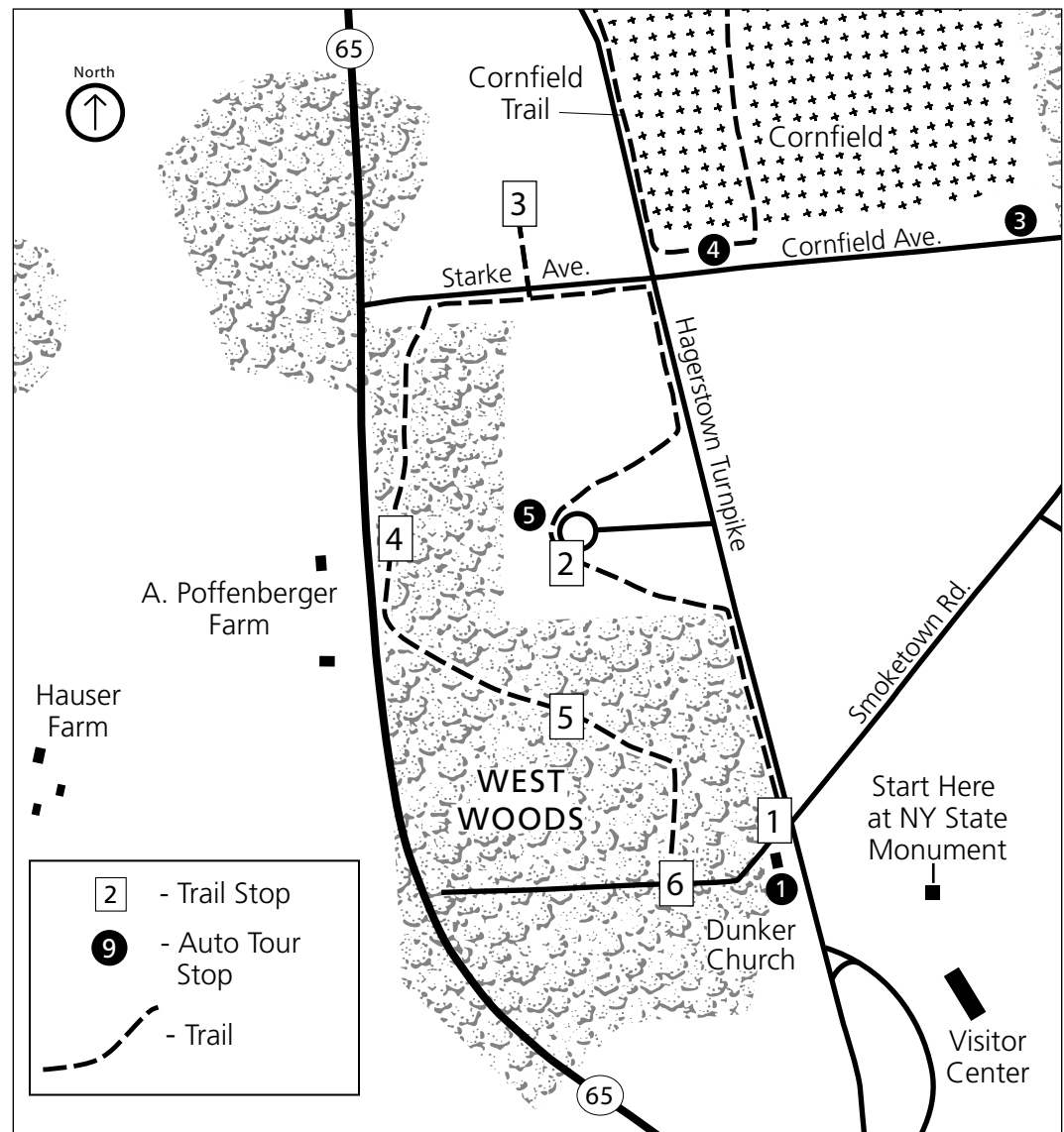
# The West Woods Trail

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Antietam National Battlefield  
P. O. Box 158  
Sharpsburg, MD 21782



## Trail Map

This trail map shows the current roads and park features with the historic boundary of the West Woods.



## Introduction

The West Woods Trail starts with an introduction at the New York State Monument just north of the visitor center. Please allow approximately sixty to ninety minutes to walk this 1.5 mile trail. When walking, please stay on the trail and watch out for groundhog holes, as well as poison ivy near the trail.

When the battle unfolded on September 17, 1862 Union General Edwin Sumner's Second Corps were positioned at the Pry House, located 1.5 miles east of this point. It was not before long that these men were

sent to aid the Union forces already engaged on the northern end of the battlefield. During their crossing of the Antietam Creek, Sumner's men became stretched out into three groups (divisions.) As each division arrived on the field, they were sent into action. Gen. John Sedgwick's division arrived first and at 9:15 a.m. moved out of the East Woods toward the West Woods. When the other two divisions moved onto the field, they were sent south and they engaged Confederates positioned in the Sunken Road.

## DIRECTIONS

Begin on the north side of the New York State Monument with the Dunker Church to your left (west).

Head towards the Dunker Church and the intersection of the Smoketown Rd. and Hagerstown Turnpike to Stop 1.

Walk north up the Hagerstown Turnpike to Philadelphia Brigade Park and head towards the tall monument 100 yards to the west.

Walk back towards the Pike and head north, on the field side of the rail fence. Turn left on Starke Ave. and go fifty yards to Stop 3.

Leave the ledge and continue west down Starke Ave. toward Rt. 65. Follow the trail signs south, into the woods to Stop 4.

Continue south along MD Rt. 65, past the memorial to John Stetson, and enter back into the West Woods at the fence break and proceed to Stop 5.

Follow the trail east and then south to trail Stop 6.

Proceed east up the paved road toward Dunker Church.

## New York State Monument

By about 9:00 a.m. on the morning of September 17, 1862, the area between this high ground and the North Woods, one mile north of here, was covered with the wreckage of a titanic struggle. The Union First and Twelfth Corps battled Confederates commanded by Stonewall

Jackson to a standstill. The third Union attack started at 9:15 a.m. when General John Sedgwick led his division, 5000 soldiers, from the Second Corps out of the East Woods, right to left across the fields in front of you, toward the West Woods.

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### Stop 1 - The West Woods

In 1995 this section of the West Woods was nothing more than an open field. With the help of thousands of volunteers, the park staff has replanted a large section of the woods. This point marks the southern end

of Sedgwick's line as his men moved into the West Woods. The impressive battle line extended from this spot up to modern day Starke Avenue.

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### Stop 2 - Philadelphia Brigade Park - The Center of the Union Line

This stop is at the center of the third line of Union infantry to move into the West Woods. At first, Confederate artillery positioned west of this spot, on Hauser Ridge, stopped the Union advance. Within

ten minutes, Confederate infantry, led by Generals LaFayette McLaws' and John Walker, crashed into the open left flank of the Union line (just to your south/left).

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### Stop 3 - The Rock Ledge

This rock ledge provided cover for both Confederate and Union soldiers on the morning of the battle, before the West Woods action started to unfold. The ledge changed

hands at least four times during the first three hours of battle. The confusing action around this area demonstrates the important role terrain played during this battle.

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### Stop 4 - The Wounded Lion

When the 15th Massachusetts reached this point, they were quickly caught in a devastating cross fire from three sides. At one point, a member of the regiment remembered, "a battery of the

enemy planted on the hillside yonder did considerable execution in our ranks." In twenty minutes, over 340 men in this regiment had been killed or wounded.

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### Stop 5 - Avenues of Attack

This low lying, tree covered terrain provided cover for Confederate soldiers from Mississippi and South Carolina and allowed them to slam into the unsuspecting flank of Federal soldiers that had taken up positions just north of this point. This Confederate

attack, led by General LaFayette McLaws's Division, inflicted over 2,000 casualties in about twenty minutes. The action in the West Woods was the only time on the field that Confederate forces outnumbered their opponent.

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### Stop 6 - Confederate Success

At this point, Union soldiers from three different states attempted to hold the southern most point of Sedgwick's separated line. A collection of three different Confederate brigades flanked the Federals posted here and then drove them to the north and west out of the West Woods. This engagement precipitated the

retreat of Sedgwick entire division back toward the East Woods. The New York monument was dedicated in 1902 and the 125th Pennsylvania was placed on the field in 1904. Even though these two regiments are from different corps, they fought side-by-side in the West Woods.

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As the battle ended in the West Woods, Federal troops shifted their assaults to the Sunken Road. The Confederate forces controlled the northern end of the woodlot for the remainder of the day, but around the Dunker Church, a Union division of over 1,500 men advanced into the woods at around 11:00 a.m. They held for about an hour before being driven out and by about 1:00 p.m. Confederate forces controlled the West Woods.